

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

Membrane proteins are difficult to express in recombinant form, purify, and characterize, at least in part due to their hydrophobic or partially hydrophobic properties. Membrane scaffold proteins (MSP) assemble with target membrane or other hydrophobic or partially hydrophobic proteins or membrane fragments to form soluble nanoscale particles which preserve their native structure and function; they are improved over liposomes and detergent micelles. In the presence of phospholipid, MSPs form nanoscopic phospholipid bilayer disks, with the MSP stabilizing the particle at the perimeter of the bilayer domain. The particle bilayer structure allows manipulation of incorporated proteins in solution or on solid supports, including for use with such surface-sensitive techniques as scanning probe microscopy or surface plasmon resonance. The nanoscale particles facilitate pharmaceutical and biological research, structure/function correlation, structure determination, bioseparation, and drug discovery.